

My #YALILearns – Training Entrepreneurs and Leaders in Rwanda

Caption: Jean Bosco Nzeyimana at his #YALILearns event on entrepreneurship and  leadership in Rwanda (Courtesy photo)

By Jean Bosco Nzeyimana, 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow

With glittering faces, thirsty for knowledge and filled with diverse expectations, over 50 young people from all corners of Rwanda came to attend a #YALILearns training event that YALI Rwanda fellows hosted in Huye, Rwanda.

When Ange (another Mandela Washington Fellow) and I, on behalf of YALI Rwanda, designed the training, we couldn't agree more that the suitable topic would be "Entrepreneurial Leadership." This is traced far back in a story that the majority of young people across Africa share. Nowadays, we are the first generation of educated people. Many of us have parents who haven't gone to school, and the only thing — yet very important — that we have learned from them is "value." While on the other side of the world a mom is teaching her son how to write computer codes, at home I am teaching my parents basic savings concepts and the reasons we need a farm of vegetables and fruits in our backyard.

Our #YALILearns event took only five days to plan and implement, including promoting the event, signing up participants and holding the training session. We used the [YALI Network Online Courses](#) "Fundamentals of Starting and Running a Business" and "Strategies for Personal Growth and Development." We also focused on exploring ways to meet challenges that we face in our communities through entrepreneurship and leadership. To sustainably meet the underlying challenges in our communities, we need to be both entrepreneurs and leaders. Our goal was to make sure that participants knew how they can solve problems they face in their communities through entrepreneurship. So we made sure they understood the basics. Through this lens, problems become opportunities for business ventures that ultimately lead to job creation and income generation. Applying the principles of leadership makes us remember who we are as young Africans and where we want to take our continent — thanks to the #YALILearns toolkits that we used and guest speakers who shared their journey with the participants.

Through this training, we were able to shed light on a number of topics, ranging from business idea conceptualization to writing a winning business plan. Needless to say, all participants got the opportunity to craft and pitch their ideas, but more importantly, they left inspired and hungry to be agents of change.

With this very experience, we were prompted to plan similar events in other parts of Rwanda. This is something you can do as well by either centering your training around the same topic or finding something that is relevant to your place.

God bless Africa.

Editor's Note: For resources to help you plan and hold your own #YALILearns event, including the

toolkits mentioned above, go to yali.state.gov/learns.
